

VZCZCXRO2733
PP RUEHFK
DE RUEHKO #3998 2000407
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 190407Z JUL 06
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4436
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCPDOG/USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUYNAAAC/COMNAVFORJAPAN YOKOSUKA JA PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RHHMHBA/COMPACFLT PEARL HARBOR HI//N541// PRIORITY
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RUHBANB/OKINAWA FLD OFC US FORCES JAPAN CP BUTLER JA PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA PRIORITY
INFO RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 7269
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 0573
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3351
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EAP/J, EAP/P, PM;
USTR FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE;
TREASURY FOR OASIA/IMI;
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CP BUTLER OKINAWA FOR AREA FIELD OFFICE;
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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION Q MIDDLE EAST - TOKYO

LEAD STORIES: Wednesday morning's Yomiuri front-paged an interview Tuesday with Deputy Israeli Prime Minister Perez in Tel Aviv. During the interview, Perez turned down UN Secretary General Annan's proposal for the dispatch of an international force to stop fighting between Israeli troops and Hezbollah militants.

¶1. "Lebanon Crisis: Syria's Isolation Deepening" The liberal Asahi's Cairo correspondent Tachino commented (7/19): "The deepening crisis in Lebanon has driven Syria into a tight corner. Syria has drawn criticism not just from the US but also from neighboring Arab countries for its role in supporting extremist groups that are roiling the region in violence. Though Syria is using the crisis to strengthen its anti-US cooperative relationship with Iran, there are growing concerns that Syria is, like Iran, becoming isolated within the international community. At an emergency Arab League foreign ministerial held last Saturday in Cairo, Saudi Arabia blasted Hezbollah and Syria....

¶2. "Most of the governments in the region are irritated that Hezbollah, which is supported by Iran and Syria, and the Palestinian extremist group Hamas have destabilized the Middle East through their unexpected actions.... What experts on Arab affairs are keeping a close watch on is Iran's expanding influence on Syria. Ever since the possibility emerged of a US strike on Iran in response to that country's nuclear program, there has been talk of Tehran launching a proxy war using extremists.... Iranian Foreign Minister Mottaki visited Damascus Monday for talks with Syrian President Assad to play up the friendly relations between their countries. A professor at the University of Damascus asks: 'How will Iran use its relationship with Syria in its confrontation with the US?

It is possible that Tehran will seek to make a backroom deal with Washington, so Syria is becoming somewhat concerned.'" "

SCHIEFFER